(c) whether Government are going to take some stringent measures for the protection of black buck species; if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) No, Sir. As reported by the State Government no poaching of black bucks in the forest area of Jhajjhar district has been reported prior to the poaching incident dated 3rd June, 2005.

(b) Eight persons have been arrested for poaching in Jhajjhar district and FIR has been registered against them.

(c) Yes, Sir. The following measures have been taken to protect the black bucks:

1. Black buck is included in the Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, thereby giving it highest protection. Hunting of black bucks is prohibited under the provisions of the Act.

2. Necessary technical and financial assistance is provided to the State Government for conservation and development of habitats of black bucks under Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Development of National Parks and Sanctuaries".

3. State Government also has taken adequate measures for the protection of black bucks.

Construction of stone statue of Buddha in Karnataka

1330. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that Eco-activists and local people are up in arms against the proposed construction of the world's tallest stone statue of Buddha on a rock face at Ramanagaram region in Karnataka;

(b) whether Government are aware of the fact that the proposed project is likely to destroy a large portion of natural rock formations and eat into forest land as also the construction work will adversely affect the already shrinking habitat of several rare bird species as well as the endangered sloth bear; and

(c) If so, whether Government had studied implications of this project before giving provisional clearance to this project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) No representation has been received specifically from local people against the proposed construction of the stone statue of Buddha to be carved on the rock face at Ramanagaram in Karnataka. However, a joint representation from three Non-Governmental Organisations, *i.e.*, Environment Support Group, Karnataka Mountaineering Association, and "KINSROC," has been received in the Regional Office of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Bangalore against the construction of the statue.

(b) and (c) Regional Office of the MoEF at Bangalore has accorded in-principle approval in June 2005 for diversion of 4.05 hectares of forest land in Handigundi Reserved Forest, in Ramanagaram Taluk to facilitate carving of the statue of Sanghmitra Buddha on the rock face. The approval has been given on a proposal for the purpose, received from the Government of Karnataka. The State Authorities, while submitting the proposal certified that the project would not adversely affect environment including Wild Life and Monuments of Historical, Religious or Archaeological importance. The diversion of forest land did not involve any felling of trees as the proposed area was devoid of any tree growth. For enhancing the landscape, the proposal envisaged acquisition of 24 hectares of Revenue land in the foreground of the rock face for the purpose of plantation of trees and medicinal plants. Additionally, Regional Office of MoEF at Bangalore, while granting in-principle approval has stipulated the condition of raising Compensatory Afforestation on equal area of non forest land to further mitigate the adverse impact of the project on the environment.

Survey to ascertain the existing tigers in the country

1331. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that after reports of missing tigers from Sariska Tiger Reserve, a survey has been conducted in all Tiger Reserves to ascertain the existing tigers in the country;